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the Washington Wine Institute
is the voice on regulatory & legislative issues that affect the Washington wine industry

WWI Legislative Update

Greetings from Olympia! WWI has been busy on your behalf and we have an update for you from the Capitol, as we have just passed a critical deadline in the House and Senate.

Here's a quick look at where we stand:

Alive Bills:

The following bills that we supported were voted out of policy Committees before today's deadline and will continue to move through the process.

SB 5788 "Omnibus Stakeholder Bill"--

SB 5788 contains WWI language that will fix some of the issues wineries have reported experiencing when participating in charitable events. If passed, SB 5788 will allow you to pay a reasonable booth fee to the charitable organization hosting the event (a practice that is currently illegal) for their coordinating services. The bill will also help to alleviate the headaches associated with payment for your wine at the event. Instead of dealing with the now commonplace "check swap", the charity will be able to pay you for your wine at the close of the event.

SB 5788 would also resolve an issue with Agents Licenses that has come up in recent months. The WSLCB interprets current law to require that wineries and their employees (except those that are a sole-proprietorship) obtain an annual \$25 Agents License in order to sell and market wine off of their winery premise, including to retailers! This is a requirement that we believe very few wineries are aware of, so WWI introduced language that will make it clear in the law that wineries and their employees do not need an Agents License to sell their own wine.

Also included in our stakeholders' bill is language that will help our friends at WAWGG and other industry trade shows. At the WSLCB's suggestion, our bill adds a provision that will allow barrel vendors to provide wine samples at wine related trade shows. Without this fix, vendors would be serving wine without a license.

HB 1227/ SB 5173 "Corkage Fees"—

HB 1227 and SB 5173 would allow wineries and restaurants to participate together in corkage waiving programs to promote local tourism. As you'll recall, this legislation came about as a result of a liquor board enforcement action that put a stop to the popular "Corkage Free Zone" in Yakima. While WWI was able to reach an agreement with the WSLCB to continue the program immediately, these two bills are still moving through the process as additional support for the activity.

HB 1172/ SB 5029 "Farmer's Markets Wine Tasting"—

WWI testified in support of these clone bills that would establish a pilot program for beer and wine tastings at farmer's markets, much like the pilot program for grocery stores that reached permanent status last Session. WWI is happy to

support legislation that promotes wineries in their communities and we strongly believe that the more consumers are able to interact with winemakers and sample wonderful Washington wines, the more consumers will purchase them!

Dead Bills:

The following bills that we opposed failed to pass out of Committees before the required deadline and are therefore considered “dead” for the Session.

SB 5258/ HB 1372 “Changes to COD”–

These bills would have changed the current Cash on Delivery or allowable pre-payment arrangements in current law to a “check’s in the mail” system, in which retailers would have had up to 5 days to send wineries a check. WWI opposed this bill and several of our small wineries traveled to Olympia to express their concerns about the legislation to the Committees.

SB 5257 “Craft Wineries”–

SB 5257 declared that wine made by wineries producing less than 25,000 gallons a year can be deemed “not wine” and therefore not regulated by state liquor laws, except for a handful of laws that are specifically referenced. The bill would have created two separate and unequal regulatory schemes for WA wine producers, disrupting our in-state marketplace by allowing “some” to pay to play, when most don’t want to. Again, WWI was aided in its opposition by many WWI members who spoke to the Committee and individual legislators about how this type of proposal could harm our industry.

Senate Bill 5256/ HB 1482 “Out-of-State Retailers”–

These bills would have opened up direct to consumer shipping into WA State to *all* out-of-state retailers, wholesalers and importers. WWI opposed this bill, which would put our in-state retail partners that currently follow WA laws at an unfair economic disadvantage.

Welcome, Grayson!

Finally, we are thrilled to announce the arrival of Grayson Ottavelli. Craig Ottavelli, WWI’s Director of Operations, and his wife Amy welcomed a healthy baby boy into this world on Friday. Grayson joins his big brother, Rainier. We wish them all the best!

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